

Bill inspired by Summitville Tiles experience

Washington, D.C. – Today Congressman Charlie Wilson (OH-6) introduced a bill to improve transparency and accountability in the federal subcontracting process. The legislation was inspired by a company in Wilson's district, Summitville Tiles, that was treated unfairly during a 2009 construction bidding process with the U.S. Army. In recognition of the company's effort to expose the problem in the federal subcontracting process, Wilson named the bill "Summitville Procurement Protection Act".

"For too long, companies have been kept in the dark regarding subcontracting procedures for federal contracts," Wilson said. "Federal Acquisition Regulation holds the government to certain transparency and reporting standards as it hires prime contractors. However, it does not hold prime contractors to the same standards as they, in turn, hire subcontractors. This is a complete lack of oversight and needs to change."

Summitville Tiles was denied the opportunity to present a formal bid because of the informal nature of the subcontracting process.

Wilson's bill aims to rectify this lack of oversight by requiring that prime contractors meet five sections of the Federal Acquisition Regulation as they hire subcontractors.

Prime contractors would be required to publicize proposed subcontracting opportunities; select subcontractors based on full and open competition; report information on the subcontract award; disclose certain information to unsuccessful bidders; and provide access to a copy of the contract of the winning bidder or offer.

In November 2009, Congressman Wilson led a group of his Ohio colleagues in sending a letter to Secretary of the Army John McHugh regarding a school construction project awarded by the U.S. Army. The Army accepted a bid without allowing Summitville Tiles, a 100-year-old ceramic Tiles and brick company located in Summitville, OH, to submit a bid for the same project. After a follow-up meeting with US Army officials, Wilson discovered that the problem was directly related to the Army's contractor's hiring of subcontractors for the school project. Because there were no disclosure requirements for the subcontract awards, Summitville was not only left out of the award process, but it was unable to get answers regarding how decisions in the award were made.

"I am grateful to Summitville Tiles for bringing this problem to my attention. While I hate to see any of companies in our district treated unfairly, I am honored to introduce this legislation on

behalf of Summitville Tiles and all the companies like them that have been left out of the loop in federal contracting procedures in the past,” Wilson said. “Subcontractors deserve the accountability these regulations would provide them with throughout the bidding process. With a more even playing field, these companies will be in a better position to win important contracts in the future.”